

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /057 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9627

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 11188

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: TWO VIEWS OF ELECTION RESULTS

SUMMARY. A FUKUDA LIEUTENANT ATTRIBUTED LDP'S UNEXPECTEDLY GOOD SHOWING IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTION TO VOTER DESIRE TO AVOID SUDDEN CHANGE, UNITED AND WELL-ORGANIZED LDP AND OPPOSITION DISARRAY. JSP SEC GEN, ON OTHER HAND, TOLD US NLC FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS WAS MAIN FACTOR. BOTH AGREE UPPER HOUSE RESULTS AUGER WELL FOR LDP IN NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. OTHER POLITICIANS ARE NOT SO SURE, HOWEVER, AND BELIEVE TRENDS ARE MURKY. END SUMMARY.

1. FUKUDA LIEUTENANT AND LDP DIET POLICY CHAIRMAN SHINTARO ABE RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF HE WAS PLEASED WITH UPPER HOUSE ELECTION RESULTS, ADDING LDP HAD DONE SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN HE PERSONALLY HAD EXPECTED. HE ATTRIBUTED LDP RETENTION OF UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY TO VOTER'S DESIRE TO AVOID SUDDEN CHANGE (WHICH HE DISTINGUISHED FROM VOTER
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DESIRE FOR LDP MAJORITY), A UNITED, WELL-ORGANIZED LDP, AND OPPOSITION DISARRAY. HE NOTED THAT ANTI-SOVIET EMOTIONS AROUSED BY RECENT JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS HAD ALSO WORKED TO DETRIMENT OF JSP AND JCP. NLC PERFORMANCE, HE SAID, INDICATED THERE WERE SHARP LIMITS TO ITS POTENTIAL GROWTH.

2. ABE CONTINUED THAT ELECTION OUTCOME HAD USHERED IN UNEXPECTEDLY PEACEFUL SITUATION WITHIN BOTH LDP AND DIET. WOULD-BE CRITICS OF FUKUDA WITHIN LDP HAVE BEEN SILENCED, PERMITTING FUKUDA TO CONCENTRATE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY HIS ASEAN TRIP, AND BUSINESS RECOVERY. OPPOSITION PARTIES, ABE SAID, WERE UNABLE TO DEMAND FUKUDA'S RESIGNATION AS THEY MIGHT HAVE IF LDP HAD LOST ITS UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY. THUS HE EXPECTED RELATIVE QUIET IN DIET, TOO, UNTIL EARLY NEXT YEAR AT LEAST. AS FOR THE LONGER TERM, ABE SAID LDP'S GOOD UPPER HOUSE PERFORMANCE AUGURED WELL FOR NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTION, BUT AFTER THAT TRENDS WERE UNCLEAR.

3. JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY (JSP) SEC GEN MASASHI ISHIBASHI, ON OTHER HAND, TOLD EMBOFF REASON FOR LDP'S SURPRISINGLY GOOD SHOWING WAS SIMPLE: NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLC) HAD UNEXPECTEDLY DONE POORLY. ALL OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES HAD DONE ABOUT AS EXPECTED, INCLUDING JSP. THAT BEING CASE, IF NLC HAD TAKEN ADDITIONAL TWO OR THREE SEATS IN NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY AS MOST PEOPLE FORECAST, LDP WOULD INDEED HAVE LOST ITS MAJORITY. REASON FOR NLC'S WEAKNESS, ISHIBASHI SAID, WAS NOT LACK OF FUNDS OR ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT BUT RATHER LESSENER ATTRACTIVENESS OF IMAGE TO VOTERS. NLC'S WANING POPULARITY MIGHT IN FACT PROVE FATAL.

4. ISHIBASHI UNDERSCORED IMPORTANCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES
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WORKING IN LDP FAVOR IN MONTHS BEFORE ELECTION. FIRST AMONG THEM WAS JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH HAD BOLSTERED LDP'S IMAGE AS DEFENDER OF NATIONAL INTEREST, WHILE INEVITABLY HURTING COMMUNISTS AND, TO LESSER EXTENT, JSP. SECOND FACTOR WAS LACK OF CURRENT SCANDAL OR OTHER ISSUE PUTTING LDP IN BAD LIGHT (A LA LOCKHEED LAST YEAR). THIRD WAS LDP'S SUCCESS IN WORKING OUT COMPROMISES WITH OPPOSITION PARTIES ON BUDGET AND OTHER LEGISLATION, ASSURING EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THIS YEAR'S DIET. THIS HAD CONVINCED MANY BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE VOTERS THAT HAVING LDP IN POWER, EVEN WITH ONLY THING MAJORITY, WOULD GUARANTEE SMOOTH, VIABLE ADMINISTRATION.

5. ISHIBASHI ADDED THAT LDP'S SUCCESS IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTION DID NOT MEAN THAT ITS LONG-TERM DECLINE IN SUPPORT HAD ENDED. TO CONTRARY, DESPITE SUCCESSFUL SEAT TALLY, ITS PERCENTAGE OF VOTE HAD REMAINED WELL BELOW FORTY-PERCENT LEVEL, WHICH NOW SEEMED UPPER LIMIT. WITHIN THAT LIMIT LDP WOULD PROBABLY MAINTAIN PRESENT STRENGTH IN NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. FURTHER IN FUTURE, HOWEVER, LDP WAS ALMOST CERTAIN TO LISE ITS MAJORITY.

6. COMMENT. WE HAVE HEARD VARIATIONS ON THESE THEMES IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADING POLITICIANS ACROSS LDP FACTIONAL SPECTRUM AND IN OPPOSITION PARTIES. ALTHOUGH EMPHASIS VARIES, MOST AGREED THAT VOTER UNEASE OVER LAGGING DOMESTIC ECONOMY AND PERCEIVED EXTERNAL PRESSURES; EXCEPTIONALLY EFFECTIVE LDP UNITY AND TACTICS; OPPOSITION FAILURE TO FORGE COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS; AND, OPPOSITION FAILURE TO PROJECT IMAGE OF RESPONSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO LDP, ALL WORKED TO LDP ADVANTAGE. THERE IS DISAGREEMENT, HOWEVER, ON WHAT ELECTION OUTCOME MEANS FOR LDP FUTURE, AND SEVERAL POLITICIANS HAVE RESORTED TO SUMO WRESTLING ANALOGY. TOP SUMO WRESTLER (LDP) WAS PUSHED TO RING EDGE (AND POSSIBLE DEFEAT) BY LOWER-RANKED CHALLENGERS (OPPOSITION PARTIES). BY DINT OF WILL
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AND STRATEGY, TOP WRESTLER PREVENTED JUNIORS FROM FORCING HIM OUT OF RING. IT WAS UNCLEAR, HOWEVER, WHETHER TOP WRESTLER WOULD BE PUSHED OUT IN NEXT CHALLENGE OR REGAIN INITIATIVE AND FORCE HIS WAY BACK TO RING CENTER.

7. ABE AND ISHIBASHI, ALONG WITH OTHER ELECTION SPECIALISTS, SEE DISTRIBUTION OF UPPER HOUSE VOTE AS AUGERING WELL FOR LDP IN NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTION, EXPECTED DURING LATTER HALF OF 1978. ON OTHER HAND, CRUCIAL ELEMENTS IN LDP'S HOLDING ITS OWN IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTION -- FAVORABLE NATIONAL MOOD, UNUSUAL LDP UNITY, AND RELATIVE OPPOSITION INEFFECTIVENESS -- COULD WELL CHANGE OVER NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS WITH IMPORTANT, BUT UNCERTAIN, IMPLICATIONS FOR NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTION RESULTS.
MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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